

Day of Infamy+60

CG man survived leap off reeling ship

By ALAN LEVINE

When Paul Goodyear emerged from below decks on Sunday morning, the sun was a fireball on the horizon and he had to squint his eyes until they adjusted to the bright light. The strapping 23-year-old signalman third grade had just relieved the 4-to-8 watch and part of his duties on his 8-to-12 watch was the raising of the proper flag at the bow of the ship, while the Stars and Stripes were being raised at the stern.

Two strikers (apprentice seamen) accompanied Goodyear on deck, and the three sailors paused for a moment, waiting for colors to be sounded, before descending a series of ladders and then making their way down the length of the ship to the bow.

His eyes had not yet made an adjustment to the brightness of the morning sun, and as he looked out across the harbor, Goodyear noticed a line of aircraft about three-quarters of a mile away, just beyond the sandbar island that the Navy referred to as Hog Island.

He didn't think anything of it, since low-flying aircraft were commonplace in the area, and he still wasn't concerned when one of the planes appeared to let go of a bomb over what he perceived to be the sandbar, because it was common practice for U.S. dive bombers to jettison their unused practice bombs before landing at Hickam Field.

"It wasn't unusual to see planes dumping unexpended ordnance, water or sand bombs on that little strip of land," Goodyear said. "The pilots wanted to lighten the load before landing. I turned away, because colors had sounded, and we needed to start making our way down to the lower deck and to the bow of the ship, but then I turned around real quick at the sound of the first explosion."

"I looked up in time to see the third plane drop a bomb, and then a big blaze of fire raised up from the hangar over there. I put a pair of 750 binoculars to my eyes, and I was hit immediately with that meatball (red circle) on the fuselage of the planes, and I said: 'My God. It's the g***** (Japanese)'."

The line of planes were buzzing just over the ship's stacks when Goodyear happened to glance across the harbor toward Mary's Point and saw a torpedo plane coming in just above the water's surface. Within the blink of an eye, the plane let loose of its ordnance. Goodyear quickly shouted to his strikers that there was a "fish in the water."

"I yelled: 'Hang on Red. There's one coming right for us.' And he yelled back: 'Yeah, and here comes another one.' In a period of about 60 seconds, we got four fish, and well ... I don't know if they all



Staff photo by Alan Levine

Casa Grande resident Paul Goodyear proudly displays a framed collection of photos and other memorabilia that chronicle his experiences as a Pearl Harbor survivor. Goodyear and other members of the Pearl Harbor Survivors organization attended a ceremony in Honolulu today.

The Oklahoma did end up like the Poseidon, as in the movie "The Poseidon Adventure," toppling over until it was mostly upside down in the water. It was largely due to the fact that the ship was sitting in port with everything open.

"We had no water-tight integrity," Goodyear said. "We had even opened up our most secure fittings. The bilges were open. The torpedo blisters were open. Everything was open. We were like an eggshell, so the first fish would have scuttled the whole thing. Once it was breached, the water rushed through there, and those kids were trapped down there, and to this day, it really bugs you that some of them drowned."

With the tears welling up in his eyes, Goodyear recalled his thoughts then and now: "I wish every one of them was killed by a torpedo, but I know they weren't. They were trapped. It's the sailor's worst nightmare, to be trapped in a sinking ship. Just think about it. You're in the dark, with the water slowly rising, and you know that every breath you take is bringing you closer and closer to death by suffocation, that is if you don't drown first. I know for a fact that some of those kids were trapped like that for several days before they died from lack of air. That's why I wish they had all been killed by the torpedo."

The explosions were seconds apart, violently rocking the huge battleship. Goodyear later learned that at least nine torpedoes and perhaps as many as a dozen had struck the USS Oklahoma.

"The planes were lined up, each waiting their turn to drop their fish, and as the ship started to turn over, we could see that we weren't going to last long," said Goodyear, "so we started down the ladder."

Instinctively, Goodyear hesitated before setting foot on the ladder. He then turned and raced back to his quarters to retrieve the secret code book that was used for the flags. (During periods of radio silence, communication between ships was done through the use of a pair of signal flags.) Once he had the book secured under his arm, Goodyear proceeded to slide down the ladder to the deck below.

"It was the most stupid thing that I ever did in my life," he said. "I carried that damn thing, and it wasn't really that important, besides it had lead plates on the front and back covers so that it could be sunk in times like this. It was awkward enough going down a ladder that's rapidly going over to 90 degrees. By the time I got down to the deck, the ship was at about 30 degrees, and it kept rolling all the time."

Sailor survived Pearl Harbor

The Oklahoma lost 429 men out of a crew of about 1,250, and to this day, only 35 bodies have been identified. Goodyear estimates that there couldn't have been more than a half-dozen men off the ship on liberty at the time of the attack. Of the 647 unknown bodies from the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, 381 were from the USS Oklahoma.

"The Arizona lost more men," Goodyear said, "but if you stop to think of it, what ship would you rather have been on? The Arizona men were dead in an instant. They didn't even know what happened. It happened so instantaneously. I saw the bomb hit the Arizona. I saw them coming in over the stern, and the first bomb hit turret number two, and about the same time, I decided that I better get out, because that third plane had my name all over it."

Goodyear was born and raised in Michigan, and when asked what part of Michigan, he answers "all over." He said that his mother died when he was very young and as a result, he was shunted back and forth between

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— Paul Goodyear

relatives and family friends. He never mentioned anything about his father.

"I can't remember, but I was told that I had gone to 13 different schools before I was in the third grade. I get so disgusted with these people these days that their youth is why they're messed up adults today."

Shortly after getting mustered out of the Navy in October 1945, Goodyear married and began working in the aerospace industry. He moved to Arizona in 1955 when his wife developed rheumatic fever. He married his current wife Jean while he was working for a spell in Guatemala, and that was in 1982. They have two adopted boys, and Jean has two children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

With the attack still in progress and the Oklahoma heading for Davy Jones's locker, Goodyear and his men went over the side and into the water. They managed to make it to shore, but what awaited them in the aftermath of the attack wasn't exactly what they had expected.

The seamen spent the next several weeks in a limbo. They had literally abandoned their home when they jumped from the deck into the oil-coated waters. They had left everything behind including money, clothing and identification. To make matters worse for them, the military was also in a limbo, because of having to deal with so many matters, not the least of which was mounting a counter-offensive.

"After the attack," said Goodyear, "we went to Ford Island, which was a Navy base back then, but they wouldn't let us into the mess hall, and we weren't on the payroll. We were just orphans, so we scrounged and stole to survive."

According to Goodyear, there was a lot of confusion back then, and a lot of men were overlooked, mostly because of lack of proper records.

"The Navy didn't know we were there," he said. "The Navy was so discombobulated and disoriented ... so unprepared that they didn't know how to deal with it. If it had happened on the mainland, probably most of us would have just gone home, but when you're on an island, there's no use going over the hill."

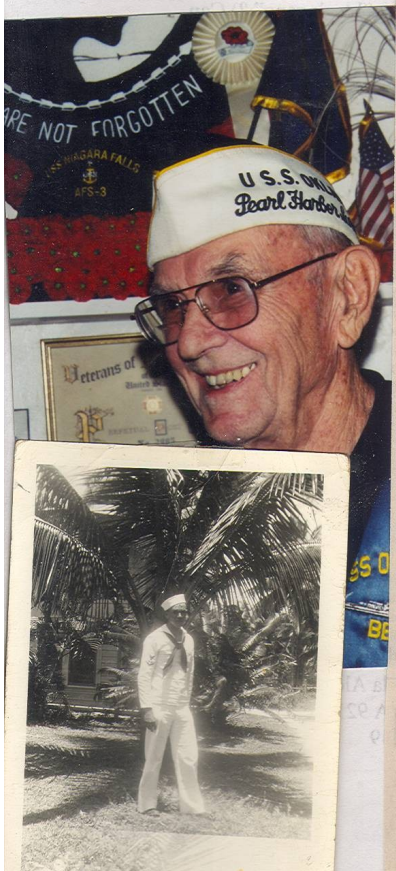
When Goodyear and his buddies jumped into the water, the oil slick was at least 8 inches thick, so he was pretty grimy, but eight days later, he was an absolute mess, so he decided to take advantage of his friendship with a crewman aboard the USS Indianapolis.

"I went over to the Indianapolis, and I approached the ensign on duty. So picture this: Here I was — this guy walking on board his clean ship, uniform all covered with gook, no hat, I hadn't shaved in eight days and I had crotch itch all over my body — and I go up and salute him and say, 'permission to come aboard, sir.'"

"That ensign just about lost his false teeth. He calls the captain over, and the captain says to my friend: 'Do you know this man, Tuck?' And he said yes, and told him that we had gone to school together. So then the captain says: 'Take him down to the master at arms shack and get him some clothes and get him a bath, but I want him off the ship in one hour.'"

Goodyear was greatly relieved that he was going to get some clothes and a bath, but his heart skipped a beat when he heard the captain call out to his friend Tuck.

"I thought that he had changed his mind and was going to have me



thrown off the ship," Goodyear said. "We stopped, and he says: 'Take him down to the mess hall, and tell the cooks to give him a meal.' Oh boy, I could have kissed that captain. Here it was, eight days later, and I was going to get a bath, a meal and new clothes."

The captain's kindness was only a momentary reprieve from the hardships that still confronted Goodyear and his fellow crewmen. They were still non-entities as far as the Navy was concerned, so it was back to scrounging and stealing, or as Goodyear put it, they went back to the "midnight stores."

A few days later, Goodyear and his friends found out that someone attached to the USS California had come up with a rather ludicrous kind of security monitoring for people coming in and out of the dock area. The idea was to cut up 3-by-5 cards into strips and write USS California on one side and have officers sign their names on the back.

"The Marines were guarding the California, and we'd go down there and say that we were a working party, and we'd start picking up these gallon cans, and then when we'd get ready to leave, the Marine would ask us to sign the back of these little cards. They thought we were officers. Hell, they were probably senior to us. Anyway, we'd sign the back of those things with any name we could think of. Once I signed Pvt. Franklin Roosevelt. The Marine would salute, and we'd salute back, and we had gotten what we came for ... food.

"Of course, the cans had been under water for days, and they had no labels on them. We'd say: 'What are we having for breakfast?' And somebody would say: 'How about bacon and eggs.' We'd open up a couple of cans and one of them would be full of asparagus and the other would be full of peaches, and that went on three times a day for several weeks."

Goodyear did not get back onto the payroll and assigned to another ship until early April of 1942. He was assigned to the USS Indiana and immediately sailed to the South Pacific and took part in the invasion of Guadalcanal. When the Indiana returned to the naval base at New Caledonia for supplies and ammunition, Goodyear was transferred to a flag, which is a crew that is directly under an admiral who is in charge of a group of ships, in this case battle-ships.

The flag moves from ship to ship, and while Goodyear was involved in 13 different invasions in the Pacific Theater of Operation, he isn't able to recall which ship he was on during

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which invasion. He says that he shuffled back and forth between the USS Indiana, USS Massachusetts and the USS Alabama.

Today, shortly after 8 a.m. Honolulu time, a ceremony took place in the "Punch Bowl," an extinct volcano that contains the national cemetery in the Pacific, where victims of the attack on Pearl Harbor are buried. Goodyear was to take part in the ceremony, standing alongside 20 of his former USS Oklahoma ship-mates.

"This is my first time back there for a reunion," Goodyear said before leaving home. "The Pearl Harbor Survivors organization has their reunion there every five years. I imagine, this will be our last one, because we're down to under 8,000 men now, and we're down to 169 from my ship. I don't know how many will be there, altogether. A lot of the guys couldn't make it for health reasons."

Goodyear admits to having conflicting emotions regarding his Pearl Harbor experiences. It was a time in his life that he will never forget. He will always remember the camaraderie and even the hardships endured after the attack with a certain fondness, but he does have a couple of axes to grind with the Navy. One is the lack of action all these years in identifying and marking the graves of the 381 USS Oklahoma crewmen that are listed as unknowns. The other, more personal, reason has to do with a little matter of \$12.

"When I learned that my name was back on the payroll," Goodyear said, "I took a look at the list on the bulletin board, and it wasn't right. I went down to the paymaster's office, and I said: 'How come I'm short?' And he says: 'How do I know that you didn't draw some advance pay?' So the Navy still owes me \$12 for six days' pay. I was making \$60 a month, and in those days, it was damn good pay, and I'm still angry today that the Navy arbitrarily took out a week's pay five months after they discovered that I still existed."